

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3147

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6830

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJ: FRANCO'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AT OCTOBER 1 DIA DEL
CAUDILLO CEREMONIES

1. ONE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT LEARN TOO MUCH ABOUT THE STATE OF FRANCO'S HEALTH FROM OBSERVING HIM AT CEREMONIES SUCH AS THOSE HELD OCTOBER 1 IN HIS HONOR ON THE DIA DEL CAUDILLO FOR THE 39TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ELEVATION TO THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF STATE. NEVERTHELESS, THE FOLLOWING IMPRESSIONS MAY BE OF INTEREST.

2. FRANCO DID NOT ATTEND THE TE DEUM HELD IN THE ROYAL PALACE CHAPEL PRIOR TO THE MAIN RECEPTION. PRINCE JUAN CARLOS WAS THERE AS HIS REPRESENTATIVE. HOWEVER, FOR ABOUT 40 MINUTES, BEGINNING AT 12 NOON, FRANCO WAS ON SHOW IN TWO CONSECUTIVE CEREMONIES IN TWO SEPARATE ROOMS OF THE PALACE, AND AFTER THAT HE ADDRESSED THE THRONG OUTSIDE FOR A FEW MINUTES. FIRST, AFTER GREETING HIS MINISTERS IN ONE ROOM, HE ENTERED THE ADJOIN-
ING ROOM TO SHAKE THE HAND OF EACH DIPLOMATIC CORPS REPRESENTATIVE IN TURN, WITHOUT, SO FAR AS I COULD SEE, SAYING ANYTHING TO ANYONE EXCEPT PERHAPS THE DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, WHO IS THE PAPAL NUNCIO. HE THEN PRECEDED TO THE THRONE ROOM WHERE AS IS HIS CUSTOM HE STOOD ON THE DAIS IN FRONT OF THE THRONE WITH THE PRINCE SOMEWHAT APART FROM HIM AND A STEP OR TWO DOWN AT HIS RIGHT. PRESIDENT ARIAS, THE GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, THE COUNCIL OF THE REALM, HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND CERTAIN OTHER
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HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS STOOD IN SINGLE OR DOUBLE LINE

AROUND THE WALLS OF THE THRONE ROOM FOR 30 MINUTES WHILE OTHER PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DOWN TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL LEVEL, AND ALSO PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVES, PASSED THROUGH THE ROOM, EACH INDIVIDUAL BOWING TO GENERAL FRANCO OR, IN A FEW CASES, TO BOTH HIM AND THE PRINCE, AS THEY PASSED BY HIM. SOME SEEMED A BIT UNCERTAIN, AND BOWED IN THE MIDDLE. WE KNOW OF AT LEAST TWO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO NORMALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN THERE THUS TO PAY THEIR HOMAGE WHO FOUND IT CONVENIENT TO BE ABSENT FROM MADRID ON THIS OCCASION, AND WE ASSUME THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SEVERAL OTHERS. THE GENERAL AGE LEVEL OF THOSE THERE WAS NOTABLY HIGH. THROUGHOUT THIS CEREMONY FRANCO STOOD IMMOBILE, EXCEPT FOR HIS CONTINUALLY TREMBLING HANDS, STARING FIXEDLY FORWARD THROUGH DARK GLASSES. FRANCO SEEMED TO ME PALE, EXPRESSIONLESS AND WEAKER THAN HIS DAILY ROUNDS OF GOLF IN THE SUMMER WOULD HAVE FORECAST. WHEN HE SHOOK HANDS HIS EYES BEHIND HIS GLASSES SEEMED QUITE BLANK. HOWEVER, HE WALKED -- OR SHUFFLED -- REASONABLY WELL ALONE AND NEGOTIATED THE SEVERAL STEPS FROM THE PLACE WHERE HE STOOD IN FRONT OF THE THRONE WITHOUT ASSISTANCE AND WITH ONLY MINOR HESITANCE. AFTER THIS CEREMONY, FRANCO MADE HIS APPEARANCE ON THE BALCONY BEFORE THE LARGE DEMONSTRATION, SPOKE BRIEFLY, AND RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES, REPORTEDLY QUITE ANIMATED, TO RECEIVE APPLAUSE.

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